

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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R 062325Z MAR 74

FM AMCONSUL BELIZE

TO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 3393

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELIZE 148

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT GT BH

SUBJECT: GUATEMALAN TROOP MOVEMENTS ON THE BELIZE-GUATEMALA
BORDER

1. BRITISH MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, MAJOR RICHARD OLDFIELD, CALLED AT THE CONSULATE GENERAL THIS MORNING (MARCH 6) TO PASS ON TO ME AND TO ASK MY ASSISTANCE IN VERIFYING A REPORT HE HAD RECEIVED WHICH SUGGESTED THE POSSIBILITY OF UNUSUAL GUATEMALAN MILITARY ACTIVITY ALONG BORDER WITH BELIZE.

2. ACCORDING TO THIS REPORT, TWO AMERICAN TOURISTS HAD STOPPED YESTERDAY AT HOLDFAST CAMP, A SURVEILLANCE OUTPOST ABOUT 35 MILES FROM THE BORDER WHICH IS MANNED BY A COMPANY OF BRITISH TROOPS, TO REPORT THAT SOMETHING SEEMED TO BE HAPPENING IN THE BORDER AREA. THEY HAD SAID THAT WHEN THEY HAD CROSSED THE BORDER INTO GUATEMALA ON MARCH 4, THEY HAD NOTICED THE GUATEMALAN BARRACKS WERE FULL OF TROOPS, BUT THAT UPON RETURNING THROUGH THE SAME AREA THE FOLLOWING DAY THEY HAD FOUND THESE SAME BARRACKS EMPTY. THE HOLDFAST COMMANDER HAD DEEMED THIS OF SUFFICIENT INTEREST TO RELAY TO GARRISON COMMANDER HERE.

3. OLDFIELD SAID HE HAD QUERIED HIS POLICE SOURCES IN THE BORDER AREAS BUT THAT NONE OF THEM HAD PICKED UP ANYTHING ON GUATEMALAN TROOP MOVEMENTS. OLDFIELD HAD, HOWEVER, LEARNED THAT THE
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GUATEMALANS HAD CLOSED THE BORDER ON SUNDAY, MARCH 3, BUT HAD RE-

OPENED IT MONDAY. HE RECOGNIZED THAT THESE MEASURES HAD PROBABLY BEEN RELATED TO GUATEMALAN ELECTIONS AND THAT ANY DEPLOYMENT OF GUATEMALAN BORDER TROOPS COULD PROBABLY BE SIMILARLY EXPLAINED. NEVERTHELESS, THE BRITISH MILITARY AUTHORITIES HERE FELT THE REPORT MERITED FURTHER INVESTIGATION, AND FOR THAT REASON HE WAS ASKING ON BEHALF OF THE GARRISON COMMANDER THAT I CHECK REPORT WITH EMBASSY GUATEMALA. I OF COURSE AGREED TO DO SO.

4. BEFORE DEPARTING ON LEAVE, BOB DRISCOLL TOLD ME HE HAD DISCUSSED PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING REPORTS OF THIS NATURE WITH JOHN DREYFUSS DURING HIS JANUARY 28 CONSULTATION THERE AND THAT IN ADDITION TO RECOGNIZING IMPORTANCE OF FULLEST EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION BETWEEN CONSULATE GENERAL AND EMBASSY, IT HAD BEEN AGREED THAT BRITISH CONSUL IN GUATEMALA SHOULD ALSO BE KEPT INFORMED.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS UNLIKELY OLDFIELD'S REPORT HAS ANY SIGNIFICANCE IT SEEMS WORTHWHILE TO FOLLOW THE PRE-ARRANGED PROCEDURE IN CHECKING OUT AND DISPOSING OF THE LESS CREDIBLE AS WELL AS THE MORE CREDIBLE REPORTS OF THIS NATURE. I WILL APPRECIATE HAVING YOUR EVALUATION OF THE FOREGOING AND I ALSO INTEND TO TELL OLDFIELD YOU HAVE APPRISED THE BRITISH CONSUL THERE OF THE MATTER IF IN FACT YOU DECIDE TO DO SO. GAWF

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